

## **Region 3 GPRA Baseline RCRA Corrective Action Facility**

# **Hercules, Inc. Aqualon Division**

**1111 Hercules Road  
Hopewell, VA 23860  
Congressional District 4  
EPA ID #: VAD003121928  
Last Updated 12/20/02**

## **Current Progress at the Site**

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The Hercules Aqualon, Hopewell, VA plant is continuing corrective action activities in accordance with the EPA Region 3 Facility Lead Program. As part of the program, Hercules is conducting an evaluation to determine whether hazardous constituents have been released from the areas in which solid waste was managed. Based on the results of the investigation, the facility may need to conduct clean up activities to address environmental contamination.

By coordinating with Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Hercules has investigated and cleaned up various units at the site. In October 1999, EPA and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) conducted a site visit to assess the current status. Subsequent to the visit, Hercules accepted EPA's invitation to enter into a Facility Lead agreement to direct site-wide corrective action.

Hercules prepared a work plan under the Facility Lead Program to begin investigating a subset of the units where there was potential for having had a release to the environment. EPA approved the work plan and Hercules implemented the field work activities in December 2001. EPA and Hercules discussed the results from the investigation in February 2002 to decide what further work was needed. Hercules prepared a workplan for sampling four additional areas at the facility and completed field work in November 2002.

## **Site Description**

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The Hercules Aqualon site occupies a 390-acre parcel of land in Hopewell, VA, and employs about 400 local residents. Hercules purchased the property in 1926 but the site has been used for industrial purposes since 1912 under various owners/operators. The Hercules Hopewell Plant is one of the largest cellulose derivative production facilities in the world. All of the finished products are based on cellulose, a raw material that comes from trees or cotton. The cellulose is swollen with sodium hydroxide (caustic) and reacted with one or more chemicals, depending on the product being manufactured. The resulting product is then purified, dried, and packaged.



View showing one of the lagoons at the Hercules site.

## Site Responsibility

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RCRA Corrective Action activities at this facility are being conducted under the direction of EPA Region 3.

## Contaminants

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Data at limited areas of the facility have shown detections of diethyl ether, ammonia, and chloride in shallow groundwater, which is not used as a drinking water source. Based on investigation work done to date, there is no soil contamination that extends beyond plant boundaries. Hercules has been working to complete appropriate cleanup activities. Three units have been cleaned up under VDEQ programs. Those units showed no significant releases to soil or water, so no cleanup was prescribed. The next stage of the investigation will concentrate on the evaluation of remaining identified units at the facility.

## Community Interaction

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Under the Facility Lead Program, Hercules Hopewell developed a comprehensive Community Relations Plan which describes how it will conduct public involvement activities to inform the local community, the State, and any other interested parties of the activities throughout the corrective action process. Hercules has an established community outreach program into which the Community Relations Plan has been integrated.

In May 2001, two biology classes performed field work and took a riding tour of the plant, including the investigation area. Current assessment and remediation efforts were discussed. Hercules hosted a thirty-foot display in September 2001 at "Hooray for Hopewell", a city weekend fair attended by thousands. About half of the display was devoted to wildlife diversity enhancements including remediation. Hercules prepared a fact sheet for distribution during the fair.

For 2002, Hercules sent a revised Fact Sheet to the Hopewell Community and Industrial Panel, continued plant tours for interested people, presented information to the public about past remediation and current assessment work, and encouraged news coverage by local media.

## Government Contacts

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For more information about EPA's corrective action webpage, including Environmental

Indicators, please visit our site at: [www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/correctiveaction.htm](http://www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/correctiveaction.htm)

## **Facility Contact**

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